

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2326

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS XV, MILI, AR
SUBJECT ARGENTINE POLICIES IN ANTARCTICA

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS SCIENCE COUNSELOR HAS MET WITH SEVERAL US SCIENTISTS AND POLAR PROGRAM OFFICIALS RETURNING FROM US STATIONS IN ANTARCTICA. EACH HAVE MENTIONED, IN ONE CONNECTION OR ANOTHER, THAT ARGENTINA SEEMS TO BE MAKING EVERY AVAILABLE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH SOVEREIGNTY OVER THEIR CLAIMED TERRITORY. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED IN THE BUENOS AIRES PRESS LATELY REFERRING TO INSTANCES OF BIRTHS AND MARRIAGES TAKING PLACE AT ARGENTINE BASES LOCATED IN ANTARCTICA WHICH HAVE BEEN HAILED BY THE PRESIDENT AS SPECTACULAR FIRST EVENTS OCCURRING IN THE CONTINENT OF ANTARCTICA. END SUMMARY.

2. DR DAVID ELLIOT, A BRITISH SUBJECT AND DIRECTOR OF POLAR STUDIES AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, HAS BEEN
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CONDUCTING GEOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS AT THE US PALMER STATION FOR THE PAST FOUR OR FIVE YEARS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS. ELLIOT TOLD THE REPORTING OFFICER THAT THE USS HERO HAD TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY REPAIR STOP AT THE ARGENTINE BASE, EXPERANZA, WHERE HE AND THE CREW WERE ASKED FOR THEIR PASSPORTS FOR STAMPING BY AN ARGENTINE ARMY CAPTAIN. COLONEL VACA, WHO APPEARS TO THE COMMANDER OF THE

ARGENTINE ARMY PERSONNEL IN THE AREA, INTERRUPTED AND TOLD THE CAPTAIN THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY. HOWEVER VACA INDICATED TO ELLIOT THAT WHEN HE WAS VISITING MCMURDO, US OFFICIALS REQUIRED THAT HE HAVE HIS PASSPORT STAMPED. ELLIOT MENTIONED THAT HE MUST BE MISTAKEN AND ASKED FOR COL VACAS PASSPORT TO VERIFY THIS. VACA SAID HE DID NOT HAVE IT AVAILABLE.

3. ELLIOT ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE ARGENTINE BASES THAT HE HAD VISITED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS SEEMED TO BE CONDUCTING VERY LITTLE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND APPEARED TO HIM TO BE MOSTLY MILITARY BASES. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARGENTINES HAD ALWAYS BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL REGARDING REPAIRS AND COOPERATION WHEREVER REQUESTED.

4. CAPTAIN ALBERT BETZEL, OFFICE PROJECTS MANAGER, NSF, CONFIRMED ELLIOTS OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING ARGENTINE ACTS OF SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ANTARCTIC. BETZEL MENTIONED AS EXAMPLE OF ARGENTINE ACT OF SOVEREIGNTY A HEAD TAX LEVIED ON PASSENGERS ON A LINDBLAD CRUISE IN THE ANTARCTIC. HE INDICATED TO SCIENCE COUNSELOR THAT THE US HAD TO DEPEND ON THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE FOR AIRLIFTS IN AND OUT OF PALMER, PARTICULARLY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS FROM THE ARGENTINE MARAMBIO BASE. BETZEL SAID HE HOPED THIS COULD BE HANDLED ON A VERY LOW KEY BASIS, AND WHEN NSF MADE AN URGENT REQUEST TO THE EMBASSY TO CONTACT THE GOA FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS SERVICE, IT COULD BE HANDLED DIRECTLY BY THE SCIENCE COUNSELOR WITH THE AIR FORCE GENERAL STAFF. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN NOTIFIED THAT FUTURE REQUESTS OF THIS NATURE SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE BY LETTER (IF TIME PERMITS) FROM THE AMBASSADOR OR CHARGE D AFFAIRS. BETZEL ALSO INDICATED THAT THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL WHEN AIRLIFTS HAVE BEEN REQUESTED. HOWEVER, HE WANTED TO DEPEND AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE ON ARGENTINE SERVICE SINCE THIS ADDS TO THEIR FEELINGS OF SOVEREIGNTY.

5. COMMENTS: THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT ARGENTINA, THROUGH A NUMBER OF APPARENT INSIGNIFICANT ACTS, IS FURTHER ESTABLISHING ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ANTARCTICA. BY FORMING COLONIES, PERFORMING MARRIAGES, ARRANGING FOR BABIES TO BE BORN ON THE CONTINENT, SETTING UP SCHOOLS FOR THE CHILDREN OF SCIENTISTS AND MILITARY, LEVYING TAXES ON TOURISTS, BUILDING UP THEIR MILITARY BASES, ESPECIALLY AIR BASES, AND REQUESTING THE STAMPING OF PASSPORTS ALL SEEM TO ADD UP TO CONCENTRATED CIVIL AND MILITARY ACTS OF SOVEREIGNTY. EMBASSY AIR ATTACHE REPORTS

THAT AN ARGENTINE COLLEAGUE MENTIONED THAT ARGENTINA WAS
NOT GOING TO GET BURNED AGAIN AS IN THE BEAGLE STRAIT WHERE
CHILE CLAIMS SOVEREIGNTY BY MANY OF THESE SAME METHODS OF
ESTABLISHING RESIDENCE.
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